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UNCLAS MANAMA 001113

SIPDIS

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LONDON FOR ETHAN GOLDRICH

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MFA BRIEFS ON 2003 TIP ACTION PLAN STATUS

REF: 03 MANAMA 2699

1. On July 10, Chairman of the Interministerial Committee on Anti-TIP activities, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Assistant Undersecretary Shaikh Abdul Aziz bin Mubarak Al Khalifa briefed P/E Chief and PolOff on the status of the remaining items from the GOB 2003 Action Plan.

- VICTIM ABUSE SHELTER - Shaikh Abdul Aziz was pleased to report that the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs have established a victim assistance shelter in Hidd on the eastern coast of Bahrain. Shaikh Abdul Aziz invited PolOff to accompany him on a site visit.

- OPERATIONAL HOTLINE - PolOff informed Shaikh Abdul Aziz that MEPI approved a small grant to train both the MOLSA hotline telephone operators and the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights Migrant Workers Group volunteers. "Now that we have the money and a contractor, we need to set dates," she said. Shaikh Abdul Aziz said he would discuss Fall scheduling for the training seminar with MOLSA Director of Labor Relations Ali bin Abdulrahman Al Khalifa.

- PUBLIC AWARENESS PLAN BY THE MUNICIPALITIES - Shaikh Abdul Aziz reported that only the Manama Central Governate announced plans to launch a anti-TIP public awareness campaign. Shaikh Abdul Aziz indicated that he would look at renewing public awareness activities.

- INVESTIGATION, PREVENTION AND PROSECUTION - Shaikh Abdul Aziz was pleased to report that the MOLSA Director of Labor Relations Shaikh Ali has stepped up labor inspections to crack down on manpower agencies involved in human trafficking. In a July 7 Gulf Daily News article, MOLSA cited that three inspectors have been designated to look into complaints about malpracticing manpower agencies. There are currently 82 licensed manpower agencies and that in the past two years 63 agencies have been shut down. Shaikh Ali reported to PolOff on June 14 that he is working directly with the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights Migrant Workers Group on investigating housemaid abuse cases. He also said that MOLSA plans to hire more labor, safety and tourism inspectors and increase spot inspections. Shaikh Ali has issued a press release on MOLSA's campaign to crack down on "free visa" violators.

- CRIMINALIZE TRAFFICKING - P/E Chief inquired whether Shaikh Abdul Aziz had succeeded in inserting a provision to criminalize trafficking into the draft labor law. P/E Chief also asked if the GOB labor law negotiators are looking at insuring that the labor law protects household workers. Shaikh Abdul Aziz admitted that the labor law is in its infancy and would ask the MFA's Director of Legal Affairs to check the draft to see if it included provisions like these.

POSSIBLE ITEMS FOR 2004 ACTION PLAN

2. Shaikh Abdul Aziz told Emboffs that he plans to convene the inter-ministerial task force this month to discuss anti-TIP activities planned for the upcoming year. Emboffs presented possible items to be included in a GOB 2004 action plan. Shaikh Abdul Aziz thanked Emboffs for their suggestions and promised to put them before the task force.

3. PolOFF forwarded this list to Shaikh Abdul Aziz.

- Develop a comprehensive anti-trafficking law
- Bring domestic workers under the protection of its labor laws
- Encourage and foster participation of NGOs to fight trafficking
- Expedite labor dispute hearings
- Make mediation services widely available to victims
- Provide timely statistics on labor court decisions, prosecutions and complaints
- Prosecute employers that abuse or traffic victims and prevent them from securing additional work permits for foreign workers
- Participate in the approved IOM TIP project
- Schedule hotline operator training

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